



Technical Assistance Services for Communities

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Technical Directive No.: 4.0 TD#2 U.S. Coast Guard ISC Kodiak

**Meeting Summary for:
Areas of Environmental Concern on U.S. Coast Guard ISC Kodiak and
Available Information for Inner Womens Bay
Community Meeting
September 10, 2012
Sun'aq Tribal Center, Kodiak, Alaska**

I. Introduction

Blair Stone-Schneider, TASC Facilitator, began the meeting by welcoming everyone and introducing herself. She introduced Alma Feldpausch, TASC Technical Advisor. She stated the purpose of the meeting and thanked everyone for attending.

Community members then introduced themselves. Attendees included Kodiak Island native and non-native residents with backgrounds in environmental sciences, natural resources, fisheries, soil science, water quality and hazardous waste management. Reasons stated for attending included general concern for the natural environment, professional obligations, concern for the wild salmon population and interest in the U.S. Coast Guard cleanup sites. Attendees and their affiliations included:

- Bob Polasky, Chief Executive Officer and Tribal Administrator, Sun'aq Tribe of Kodiak
- Bryan Knagin, Sun'aq Tribe of Kodiak
- Edward DeNoyelles, Environmental Project Manager, U.S. Coast Guard
- Iver Mulatin, Tribal Council Chair, Sun'aq Tribe of Kodiak
- Joe Dinnocenzo, District Manager, Kodiak Soil and Water Conservation District
- Juanzetta Eads, Sun'aq Tribe of Kodiak
- Pamela Bumsted, Ph.D., Environmental Project Manager, Sun'aq Tribe of Kodiak
- Rick Rowland, Natural Resources Director, Sun'aq Tribe of Kodiak
- Trisha Pruitt, Sun'aq Tribe of Kodiak
- Vicki DeNoyelles, Sun'aq Tribe of Kodiak

After the introductions, Ms. Stone-Schneider gave a brief overview of the TASC Program and how TASC services were applied to this project. Ms. Stone Schneider described her and Ms. Feldpausch's roles as independent advisors. She also explained the various components of the project, the technical directive and rationale for the selection of the four focus sites. Attendees had no specific questions about the scope of TASC program.

II. Summary of Four Cleanup Sites on Kodiak ISC Base (Fact Sheet One)

Ms. Feldpausch then reviewed the information in the *Areas of Environmental Concern on USCG ISC Kodiak and Available Information on Inner Womens Bay* fact sheet, which included

information on the four sites addressed in the project: Former Navy Landfill, Fire Training Pit, Building A-711 and Inner Womens Bay. She identified their locations on a large display map and explained the findings of the studies reviewed relating to the sites. These findings included:

Former Navy Landfill:

- The studies showed little to no potential harm to salmon, including spawning and rearing areas.

Fire Training Pit:

- Chemicals in underground soil and groundwater are moving slowly and do not seem to be moving into the Buskin River at this time. It is not possible to rule out that chemicals migrated into the river in the past.
- There are some chemicals in the river sediment but the source of these chemicals is unclear. It is possible that these chemicals are from the Fire Training Pit but there may be other unknown sources as well.
- Petroleum-related chemicals were found in the Buskin River nearby and upstream of the Fire Training Pit at levels that may harm spawning salmon. There is not enough information available to fully understand the risk to fish and other wildlife at this time.

Building A-711:

- There is currently no evidence that the groundwater contaminates the river, but EPA and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers continue to monitor groundwater near the river.
- Even though petroleum-related chemicals were found in the river near Building A-711, the source of the chemicals is not known. These chemicals may be from Building A-711 but may also be from unknown sources.
- Some sediment samples from the Buskin River near Building A-711 had petroleum-related chemicals at levels that may harm spawning salmon. There is not enough data available to fully understand the risk to fish and other wildlife at this time.

Inner Womens Bay:

- The last sediment study (1999) showed that chemicals in sediment are not likely to harm marine organisms.
- EPA ordered more sediment sampling in inner Womens Bay during the summer of 2012 to be sure that marine organisms are not at risk. That study has been postponed until spring 2013.

Ms. Feldpausch gave a brief update on cleanup activities for each site, referring to slides of photos displayed on a large monitor. Ms. Feldpausch supplemented the information in the fact sheets with additional details on the cleanup of the sites:

Former Navy Landfill: In 1972 the Former Navy Landfill was closed, covered with soil and leveled. It is now covered in vegetation and fenced.

Fire Training Pit: A large amount of contaminated soil was removed from the area in 2001.

Building A-711: In 1999, over 8,000 tons of contaminated soil and 2,300 gallons of petroleum-related products were removed from the area.

Inner Womens Bay: There has been no cleanup activity to date in this area.

Attendees had no specific questions about the sites selected or the status of cleanup. Tribal members provided additional information on historical contamination of the greater Kodiak Island and its adverse effects on the island's natural resources. Tribal members also expressed concern over military occupation of the island that began in World War II and the effects of military occupation on local native culture. Tribal members expressed concern over the on-going influx of non-native residents to the island.

III. Summary of Possible Impacts of Four Cleanup Sites (Fact Sheet Two)

Ms. Feldpausch then reviewed the information in the *U.S. Coast Guard ISC Kodiak: Effects of Tribal Subsistence Activities* fact sheet, based on the findings from the studies she reviewed. She illustrated the possible effects these findings may have on fish, wildlife and subsistence activities for Alaska Natives on Kodiak as follows:

Wildlife and Buskin River:

- Fencing around the Former Navy Landfill, Fire Training Pit and Building A-711 limits some animal traffic, though birds can still fly in and out.
- The three sites are fenced industrial properties where wildlife protection is not an option.
- Because the sites are intended for industrial use and the contamination is found deeper than 12 feet below the surface, studies of how contamination might affect wildlife have not been done.

Fish Species and the Buskin River:

- Pink salmon eggs may be vulnerable to contamination in the river but fry are relatively low risk because they spend less than two weeks in the river.
- Sockeye salmon are the least vulnerable to river contamination because they spawn and live within in the lake and use the river for migration only.
- Silver salmon may be the most vulnerable to contamination because spawning and rearing take place in the river.
- Dolly Varden char and trout use the river for migration only and are less at risk.

Wildlife and Inner Womens Bay:

- Sediment samples collected in 1999 indicate that there was no harm to small creatures living in the sediment that are a food source for other marine wildlife.
- EPA has ordered more sampling to be done to gain a better understanding of chemicals in the bay and the potential harm to wildlife.

Ms. Stone-Schneider then reviewed the overall conclusions of the two fact sheets, emphasizing that there is a need for more information on these sites, as well as on subsistence activities in the area that could be affected by contamination at the sites. Ms. Stone-Schneider and Ms. Feldpausch discussed data gaps for the greater Buskin River and Womens Bay area. Data gaps include lack of sufficient data from the river and bay to assess human and ecological health effects. The need for more information included:

- A thorough investigation into chemicals in the river, from Buskin Lake to St. Paul Harbor.
- Examining possible sources for contamination found in the river, including sites on the ISC Kodiak Base, runoff from roads in the area, and other possible sources of petroleum-related chemicals.
- Surveying people who use the Buskin River and nearby wild areas to understand what wildlife are present and how they are being consumed.
- Studying other areas not covered in the fact sheets that are known or thought to contaminate the Buskin River.

IV. Follow-up Steps for Alaska Natives on Kodiak

After the fact sheet review, attendees discussed possible follow-up steps for the Sun'aq Tribe of Kodiak and Alaska Natives on Kodiak. During this discussion attendees identified a number of concerns as follows:

- Tribal members expressed concern over the limited scope of the current TASC project and the need for a more comprehensive evaluation of the larger geographic area, including more sites in Buskin Lake and along the Buskin River. Tribal members shared knowledge of and concern over historic waste dumping by the military in additional locations in Buskin Lake and along the Buskin River. Tribal members also expressed concern over contamination in St. Paul Harbor, coastal waters, and surrounding land from military debris displaced during the 1964 tsunami. Numerous tribal members expressed the need to integrate a “bigger picture” of the contamination in the Buskin River, Buskin Lake and Womens Bay areas.
- Tribal members expressed concern about over-harvesting of food sources and competing pressures from non-tribal sport and commercial fishing operations. They indicated that this puts stress on native subsistence users who rely heavily on these food sources. The

influx of people to Kodiak over the last century and the rising prices of non-traditional foods contribute to this concern. Attendees noted that the cost of conventional food is exorbitant, so natural resources are critical to survival. These natural resources provide subsistence users not only food but also shelter and clothing. Attendees stated that naturally harvested foods are akin to wealth.

- Tribal members expressed concern about the State of Alaska's Urban vs. Rural classification. Kodiak is currently classified as a rural area and this designation is important in assuring that Alaska Natives on Kodiak have legal right to subsistence harvest. The influx of U.S. Coast Guard and other workers (i.e., fisheries) may threaten Kodiak's status as a rural area. In the past, testimony by local residents in support of Kodiak's rural status included documentation of subsistence practices by area residents.
- Tribal members expressed that the tribe cannot only focus on three contaminated sites along the river; all areas are important to them and everything is connected. Tribal members described the sites and their impacts as "drops in the bucket." Tribal members emphasized their need to protect salmon in the greater Buskin River area. Salmon, along with the 261 other species that rely on it as a food source, should be the cornerstone of any environmental restoration program.
- Tribal members expressed concern about historical contamination by various military agencies over a 100-year timespan. Attendees listed many areas outside the four identified sites that have existing contamination from historical practices, including Nyman's Peninsula, all of Womens Bay (historical bombing test range), Drury Gulch and many undocumented dump sites (some of them off-shore).
- Tribal members discussed other impacts to natural resources including surface water run-off from roads and other surfaces and seabed pollution from lost crab pots and fishing nets. Tribal members expressed concern over the difficulty of identifying point sources of pollution.
- One tribal member expressed concern over being able to address the contamination issue as a food source issue and suggested the possibility of having the entire area classified as a Superfund site in order to secure more resources for cleanup. The tribal member expressed concern that the U. S. Coast Guard and other responsible parties do not have the resources to clean up the larger contaminated areas of Buskin Lake, Buskin River and Womens Bay.

Attendees recommended additional ways for EPA to gain information on other contaminated sites and subsistence practices. Specific discussion points and their associated recommendations included:

- Attendees discussed a series of reports that documented subsistence practices following the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill. One attendee suggested that EPA access the Outer Continental Shelf Reports. These and other reports document how the tribes use economic and natural resources.

- Attendees discussed the Alaska Migratory Bird Co-management Council (AMBCC), including support provided through the AMBCC for protection of migratory birds of importance to the tribe. Attendees referenced bird hunting and egg collection that is no longer possible on some islands in Womens Bay, due to population decline.
- One attendee recommended that EPA access a subsistence study by the Subsistence Division of Alaska Department of Fish and Game from the early 1990s. The attendee explained that this report was very thorough and would provide more detailed information on subsistence use in the area.

One attendee provided detailed recommendations for agency follow-up activities which would focus on agency and tribal collaboration:

- Interview site workers with knowledge of historical waste management and operations practices.
- Review old site logs and journals to understand historical releases and waste burial.
- Evaluate the entire watershed system rather than breaking the area up into individual sites. This would employ a holistic approach to understanding the impacts on the different water bodies.
- Solicit public input on the cleanup approach.
- Integrate existing data collected from various programs into one database to better understand the big picture, including data collected for waters listed under Section 303d of the Clean Water Act, other environmental investigations and tribal data.
- Conduct a health assessment.
- Engage tribal staff in studies being conducted to ensure relevancy to the tribe and ensure that terminology and language is consistent with the tribes' understanding.
- Collect information on subsistence activities in these areas that are general enough to be informative but do not conflict with the confidentiality of such information for Alaska Natives on Kodiak.

V. Questions and Comments

One attendee asked for clarification on the Corrective Measures Study for the three sites covered under the TASC project. The attendee specifically asked whether U.S. Coast Guard is currently initiating a cleanup project of the areas and whether there would be a public meeting or the formation of a Rehabilitation Advisory Board.

- During the meeting, Ms. Feldpausch clarified that both the Army Corps of Engineers and U.S. Coast Guard have cleanup responsibilities.¹

There were no additional questions asked during this portion of the meeting.

VI. Recommendations

Given the meeting discussion, TASC recommends that agencies, the Sun'aq Tribe of Kodiak and other Alaskan Natives come together to discuss a future plan for collaboration surrounding these sites. Such an effort would be valuable to the overall cleanup effort. Related specific recommendations include:

- The Sun'aq Tribe of Kodiak could request that EPA provide copies of all site-related documents to the tribe at no cost.
- The Sun'aq Tribe of Kodiak could work with EPA in the planning of the sampling activity of inner Womens Bay taking place in spring 2013, in order to include locations and species of particular importance for subsistence activities and local knowledge of adjacent contaminated sites.
- The Sun'aq Tribe of Kodiak and EPA could work to expand community engagement to more sites than just the four areas covered in this TASC project. This collaborative process could help align the goals of the Sun'aq Tribe of Kodiak and EPA.
- The Sun'aq Tribe of Kodiak could request that more study be completed on Buskin River, Buskin Lake and greater Womens Bay to identify other point sources of pollution, levels of contamination, and potential cleanup plans.
- The Sun'aq Tribe of Kodiak, U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), U.S. Navy (Navy), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), EPA and Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) could work together to develop a community reading room or document repository at both the city library and the Sun'aq Tribal Headquarters. This could include getting data in electronic format so it can be combined and geo-referenced.
- The Sun'aq Tribe of Kodiak, USCG, Navy, USACE, EPA and ADEC could collaborate to integrate historical studies and data that focus on locations and species of particular concern to Alaska Natives on Kodiak.
- The Sun'aq Tribe of Kodiak can request historical logs and lab manuals from USCG to better understand historical contamination.
- The Sun'aq Tribe of Kodiak could request to be able to comment directly on all USCG and EPA studies done in the Buskin River, Buskin Lake, and Womens Bay areas.

¹ Ms. Feldpausch followed up on this after the meeting. According to EPA's project manager, Jan Palumbo, EPA has asked for development of a Corrective Measures Study for each of the three sites along the Buskin River but the schedule for completion is not known at this time.

- The Sun'aq Tribe of Kodiak and the Navy could work together on upcoming site assessments.
- The Sun'aq Tribe of Kodiak, additional tribes on Kodiak, USCG, ADEC, Alaska Department of Health, EPA Region 10 and any other local stakeholders could form a Community Advisory Group.
- The Sun'aq Tribe of Kodiak and other tribes in the region could continue to develop collaborative efforts to address larger areas of concern for the shared marine environment (e.g. Sun'aq Tribe of Kodiak and St. George Tribe working on an ocean floor partnership).
- The Sun'aq Tribe of Kodiak and agencies could continue to collaborate to secure additional expertise and resources to support projects such as universities, Alaska Department of Fish and Game and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
- The Sun'aq Tribe of Kodiak could continue to work on capacity building, so that future remediation efforts could be carried out by or with help of the Sun'aq Natural Resources Department.
- The Sun'aq Tribe of Kodiak could request that a health assessment be conducted including involvement in the planning and data collection.
- The Sun'aq Tribe of Kodiak can develop an Influx Management Plan to address concerns regarding influx of non-native workers (i.e., USCG, fisheries). An Influx Management Plan could be developed to identify existing or potential impacts and means for managing impacts. Input from the tribe, community representatives, USCG, commercial fishing representatives and other stakeholders could inform this plan.

VII. Action Items

- Skeo Solutions will prepare a draft Subsistence Activities report by September 18, 2012, seeking input from the Sun'aq Tribe of Kodiak and including that input in a final version of the report if received by September 25, 2012.
- Skeo Solutions will send copies of all documents reviewed for this project to Rick Rowland, Director of Natural Resources for the Sun'aq Tribe of Kodiak.
- Skeo Solutions will provide EPA with other documents that summarize subsistence activities in the larger Kodiak area, for future reference and potential consideration in work plans, as they become available.

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